



National Book Festival 2005 A New Hampshire Perspective

*By Charles Shipman
Reference Librarian,
New Hampshire State Library*

For the fourth consecutive year, representatives of the NH Center for the Book and the NH State Library attended the National Book Festival in Washington, D.C., and once again the festival was a rousing success. This is the fifth year of the National Book Festival but it was my first chance to attend. My advice to fellow book lovers, whatever your taste in books may be: if you ever have the chance to make it to this event, by all means do it.

This year's New Hampshire contingent consisted of Mary Russell, Director of the NH Center for the Book, Michael York, State Librarian, myself and Mary's husband, Todd. We arrived Friday afternoon (Sept. 23) and hadn't walked 100 feet before our first celebrity sighting: John Kerry, getting a shoeshine. At the baggage claim we spotted Donald Hall, who was a featured author at the festival. Quite an auspicious start to the weekend!

That evening we were treated to a reception sponsored by the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress and hosted by the Center's director, John Cole. The reception was held on the grounds of the Botanic Garden of the United States. Guests from each state's

Center for the Book were in attendance and we were free to roam the grounds as we mingled. It was a wonderful way to meet other Book Center staff and librarians from around the country.

But Saturday morning was time for work. The book festival is held on the National Mall, with tents spread out throughout the grounds. We set up shop in the Pavilion of the States, an enormous tent housing tables for each of the fifty states, the District of Columbia, and several territories, including Guam, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. Each state distributed goodies to children (and adults) advertising their state's libraries and centers for the book. But the main attraction for the kids was a colorful map of the U.S., upon which each state placed a distinctive stamp or sticker. The crowds started rolling in by 9:00am and never really stopped until 5:00pm. Luckily we had volunteers from the Junior League of Washington to help us throughout the day. I'm pleased to report that most kids can in fact find New Hampshire on the map, though some of the little ones needed a bit of coaxing ("It's in the northeast. Top right corner. Keep going. Tiny little triangle. It's red. You FOUND it! Great job!") Our only mistake was that we didn't bring more loot. By late morning our 300 NH Primary pins were gone, and by early afternoon our

state maps and Center for the Book magnets were gone as well. Fortunately our stamps never ran out of ink, and we had plenty of bookmarks to hand out.

We had a very special treat at our table in the afternoon. Children's author Jennifer Ericsson stopped by our table to meet the kids and stamp their maps. Jennifer Ericsson seems to have a gift for capturing aspects of life that readers can immediately relate to. To cite just one example, my wife sometimes has to travel for work, and Ericsson's book, *Home to Me, Home to You*, about a girl whose mother is on a business trip, so perfectly captures my own family's rhythms and routines it's uncanny. Jennifer was a delight, enthusiastically engaging each child in conversation and welcoming each family to our table. Beth Blair, an illustrator who has worked with Ericsson

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New Hampshire Books

By Donna Gilbreth

In the last few years some of New Hampshire's surviving grand hotels have been beautifully restored and are once again catering to pampered guests. The Mountain View Grand in Whitefield and the Wentworth by the Sea in New Castle are magnificent hotels recently restored and re-opened to the public. In addition, the venerable Mount Washington Hotel is now open year round and competing with The Balsams in Dixville Notch for winter tourists. New Hampshire's history as a tourist mecca began simply with rooms in small guesthouses. But by the mid-1850's, especially with the expansion of railroad lines, large hotels with 200 or more rooms began to spring up. At its peak around 1900, there were over 30 large hotels operating in the state. However, changes in tourism, plus the changes wrought by two world wars and the Great Depression, destroyed the leisurely luxury hotel visit. Sadly, many hotels burned and others were eventually torn down. Now, we just have the four hotels mentioned above plus some smaller hotels like the Eagle Mountain House and Wentworth Hall in Jackson.

These plush hotels are a pleasure to visit and dine at, but a bit expensive for those of us living on state salaries (especially when facing the prospect of paying for my son's college tuition the next four years!) So, I will have to fulfill my fantasies of living in luxury by strolling around the grounds of these swank hotels and reading some of the beautifully illustrated books about these historic hotels.

I have listed below some of the books, old and new, that survey the splendors and the history of New Hampshire's grand old hotels.

McAvoy, George E. *And Then There Was One: a History of the Hotels of the Summit and the West Side of Mt. Washington.* Littleton, NH: Crawford Press, 1988

A history of the Crawford House (burned in 1977) and other defunct hotels in the Bretton Woods area, culminating with a brief history of the Mount Washington Hotel. Author McAvoy is a former owner of the Crawford House.

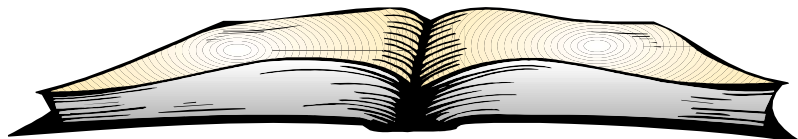
Emerson, David. *White Mountain Hotels, Inns, and Taverns (Images of America series).* Dover, NH: Arcadia Publishing, 1996

A brief history of lodgings in the White Mountains, from the early inns and boarding houses to the extravagant hotels of the railroad age.

New Hampshire Agricultural Department. *Gems of the Granite State.* Edward N. Pearson, 1893

The state, in an effort to promote tourism, created this directory of summer resorts in the state. It includes several photographs of popular natural resources and detailed information for people wishing to visit the many lodgings. In 1893 one could stay at the Mountain View in Whitefield for \$2.50 per day!

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New Hampshire's Literary Community

New Hampshire Humanities Council

By Deborah Watrous

Executive Director, NHHC

Since its beginnings in 1974, The New Hampshire Humanities Council (NHHC) has nurtured community by connecting people with ideas. Its programs have sprung from a deeply-rooted need to pass on our rich heritage, expand our understanding of the world, and rediscover the joy of learning. Through the years, the NHHC has offered challenging, provocative public programs that explore our common humanity.

In 1974, the National Endowment for the Humanities established the NHHC to grant funds to local groups for programs that explored public policy issues through the lens of the humanities. Community projects funded by the NHHC include "Energy - The Individual and the Community," a series of conferences and lectures at which over 800 participants deepened their understanding of environmental policy decisions; and "Humanities in the Legislature," in which philosopher Ronald Jager served as humanist-in-residence to the NH state legislature, bringing a humanities perspective to discussions of such topics as energy policy, environmental laws, and education.

In the 1980s, the NHHC began to develop its own programs, inaugurating a new era of civic engagement through statewide book discussions, theme-based series, and collegial partnerships. The creation of the Humanities Resource Center (now called Humanities *To Go!*) gave the state's community organizations – from professionally staffed non-profits to local all-volunteer community groups – access to high-quality public humanities



programs and scholars. Last year, the NHHC awarded over \$55,000 in Humanities *To Go!* grants to 120 different community organizations for such programs as lectures on the founding of NH towns, a discussion of the Israel-Palestine conflict, an appearance by Abraham Lincoln, and an evening of New Hampshire humor.

The NHHC has made a significant commitment over the years to fostering a love of reading and talking about books, funding hundreds of scholar-facilitators and purchasing thousands of books for library-based discussion series. In 1994, the NHHC developed "What is New Hampshire Reading," organizing discussions on over a hundred different titles over the past 11 years on topics as diverse as "New Hampshire Voices," "With Earth in Mind," "Out of Asia," and this year's "Journeys to the Edge." The Council also has experimented with holding book discussions in non-traditional venues such as a sporting goods shop, work sites, and The Portsmouth Brewery. As part of "What is New Hampshire Reading," the NHHC has brought a fascinating mix of authors to the state, from Anita Shreve to Da Chen to this fall's visit by National Book Award winner Nathaniel Philbrick on November 15th in Concord.

Since 1983, the NHHC has worked to improve the teaching of the humanities in NH's public schools by funding summer institutes and developing teacher workshops on subjects as diverse as NH history, the Silk Road, the separation of Church and State, and the teaching of Shakespeare. In 2006, the Council will pilot "Scholars in the Schools," an initiative designed to provide scholarship and resources to public school teachers in their schools, even in their classrooms.

The NHHC is supported by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities as well as by contributions and grants from individuals, corporations, and foundations in New Hampshire. Each month, the Council publishes a free calendar of events which lists 30-50 free public humanities programs taking place around the state that month plus articles on special programs and Council news. To get on the mailing list or to contribute to the NHHC, call 603-224-4071 or visit www.nhhc.org.

One of the goals of the New Hampshire Center for the Book is to promote the many organizations throughout the state whose work supports our mission of celebrating and promoting reading, books, literacy, and the literary heritage of New Hampshire. The NHHC is one of these organizations, and this profile is part of a continuing series of articles on members of New Hampshire's literary community.

Sarah Josepha Hale A NH Woman Who Shaped American Culture

By Andrea Thorpe
Library Director,
Richards Free Library

Sarah Josepha Hale was a 19th century woman of influence. While she abhorred the thought of women voting or even speaking in public, as editor of one of the most popular magazines of the time, she shaped public opinion. She was fiercely patriotic and a champion for the education of women. She believed that the future of the country rested in the hands of the nation's women as mothers and helpmeets of the nation's leaders.

Sarah Josepha Buell was born on a hilltop farm in Newport, NH. She was lucky enough to have a literate mother - a rarity in the late 18th century - and a Dartmouth educated brother, both of whom shared their education, books and love of learning with Sarah. In 1806 she opened a private "dame" school in Newport. She taught until 1813 when she married David Hale, a lawyer from nearby Alstead. They resided in Newport near the town common and Sarah

continued her education, studying with her husband for two hours every evening. Sarah and David had five children, three sons and two daughters. Two weeks before Sarah gave birth to her youngest child, David died.

Forced to open a millinery shop with her sister-in-law to support her children, Sarah turned to her pen for solace and extra income. She was determined to educate her children: "I cared not that they should inherit wealth...but to be deprived the advantages of education was to make them 'poor indeed.'" Her first book of poetry *Genius of Oblivion*, was published in 1823. She continued to write contributing essays and poems to magazines. Her first novel, *Northwood*, was published in 1827. It was the first American novel to deal with the growing differences between the North and the South. Later that year she was offered the job of editoress (Sarah's preferred title) for a new periodical for women, *Ladies Magazine*. Sarah's career as an editor had begun.

In *Ladies Magazine* Sarah gave space to "mark the progress of female improvements, and cherish the effusions of female intellect." She set new standards for the magazine in America. Unlike many of her fellow editors, she did not rely on lifting entire articles from other periodicals—in particular those from England. Instead, she promoted and published American writers such as Melville, Poe, and Hawthorn. While editing the *Ladies Magazine*, Sarah continued to publish outside of the pages of her magazine. In 1830 she published *Poems for Our Children*, which included her most famous verse, "Mary's Lamb".

Understanding the plight of widows, she helped to found the Seamen's Aid Society in Boston to educate women and provide them with employable skills. She used her editorial position to raise money from her readers by asking each of her readers to contribute twenty-five cents to fund the completion of the unfinished and stalled Bunker Hill Monument. When still more money was needed she asked her readers to hold fairs to sell their handwork to raise the money. Later she would use this fundraising model to help raise funds for the preservation of George Washington's Mount Vernon.

After thirteen years in Boston, Louis Godey persuaded Sarah to become the editor of *Godey's Lady's Book*. In 1837 she began her long association with Godey to publish the most widely read woman's magazine of the 19th century. The Boston-based *Ladies Magazine* merged with *Godey's*

Selected Works of Sarah J. Hale

Poems for Our Children: Designed for Families, Sabbath Schools, and Infant Schools, Written to Inculcate Moral Truths and Virtuous Sentiments (1830)

Northwood: A Tale of New England (1827)

Woman's Record; or, Sketches of Aall Distinguished Women, from "The Beginning" till A.D. 1850: Arranged in Four Eras: With Selections from Female Writers of Every Age. (1853)

and Sarah moved to Philadelphia as soon as her son graduated from Harvard. She brought with her the high standards she had set for *Ladies Magazine* and continued to include articles of substance. Sarah was less interested in the fashions of the day. It was Godey, not Sarah who was in charge of the fashion plates. Sarah promoted exercise, proper diet and sensible dress for women. As someone forced to support her family with her writing skills, she advocated for married women's property rights and the need to educate women as the foundation of a good family. She was a strong supporter of women doctors. Elizabeth Blackwell's graduation from medical school drew praise from *Godey's* editor.

day of November a national day of thanksgiving. Not only did she write editorials, she also penned letters to every president from Buchanan to Lincoln, to the governors of every state and territory and to many other influential people. By 1852 twenty-nine states, including New Hampshire, and all the territories declared the fourth Thursday in November a day of thanksgiving. It wasn't until 1863 that Sarah's dream was fulfilled when Abraham Lincoln signed the Thanksgiving Proclamation.

As busy as she was with her editorial duties and her causes, Sarah continued to write and publish. She was the author of seven vol-

"I cared not that they should inherit wealth...but to be deprived the advantages of education was to make them 'poor indeed'."

Sarah believed that women doctors, teachers and missionaries were needed to minister to other women. Sarah had a hand in advising Mathew Vassar as he made plans to establish his college for women. When the Vassar College trustees were debating the issue of women professors Sarah had her son, Horatio, send a letter admonishing them that students needed to have educated women as instructors.

Driven by her patriotism, it was her dream to institute a national day of thanksgiving. In the years leading up to the Civil War, she saw it as an opportunity to join all parts of the country in celebration of a national Thanksgiving. As early as 1827, in her novel *Northwood*, Sarah portrayed a Thanksgiving Day in which families gathered together to give thanks. For seventeen years, beginning in 1846, she crusaded to make the fourth Thurs-

day of November a national day of thanksgiving. Not only did she write editorials, she also penned letters to every president from Buchanan to Lincoln, to the governors of every state and territory and to many other influential people. By 1852 twenty-nine states, including New Hampshire, and all the territories declared the fourth Thursday in November a day of thanksgiving. It wasn't until 1863 that Sarah's dream was fulfilled when Abraham Lincoln signed the Thanksgiving Proclamation.

In December of 1877, at the age of 90, Sarah retired from *Godey's Lady's Book*. She died several months later in April of 1878 and is buried in Philadelphia.

Each year, since 1956, Sarah's hometown honors her and her work by bestowing the Sarah Josepha Hale Award Medal on a writer of distinction with a connection to New England. Winners have included Robert Frost, Donald Hall, Wes McNair, Maxine Kumin and Arthur Miller.

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**Center for the Book
at the New Hampshire
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Congratulations to the 2005 New Hampshire Letters About Literature Winners

Letters About Literature (LAL) is a reading and writing promotion program of the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress, presented in partnership with Target Stores. To enter, young readers wrote a personal letter to an author explaining how his or her work changed their view of the world or themselves. Readers may select authors from any genre—fiction or nonfiction, contemporary or classic. There are three competition levels in the program: upper elementary, middle school, and secondary. The contest theme encourages young readers to explore their personal response to a book and then express that response in a creative, original way.

Letters About Literature was one of the first programs of The Center for the Book at the New Hampshire State Library and this will be our third year participating in this national competition. Three hundred elementary and middle school students from New Hampshire sent letters for the 2005 LAL competition. From these, thirty semi-finalists were selected and prizes were awarded at levels I and II. The winning letters for New Hampshire were selected by a local panel of judges: Ann Hoey, Youth Services Coordinator for the NH State Library; The Honorable Thomas E. Bamberger, judge; the poet L. R. Berger; author Jennifer Ericsson; Diana S. Lytle, Reading Specialist at the Broad Street School, Nashua; and Scott Hutchison, an English teacher at Gilford High School.

November 1, 2004
Ms. Patricia Polacco
c/o Letters About Literature

Dear Ms. Patricia,

I need to tell you thank you so very much for your story about Mr. Falker. I was having such a hard time learning to read. I did not what to read. I felt not smart because I was having a hard time learning to read. Because I could not read very well, I never got my schoolwork done on time and I had to stay in the work room at recess. I asked my mom and dad to please let me be home schooled. So they let me be home schooled, but I was still having a hard time reading.

One day, my mom read me Thank You Mr. Falker. I was so surprized to know you had a hard time reading too! My Mom and Dad are kind of like Mr. Falker, they tell me how smart I am. When Mom read me your book I thought ... maybe I am smart! So I decided I would learn how to read no matter what! My Mom asked me if I would like to go to a speciael teacher for reading better. I said, "I sure would!" So my Mom hooked me up with Ms. Lisa. I began to read batter and better.

Do you know what Ms. Patricia? Not only am I reading better, but I'm writing all the time too! I write in my diary and journal. Your stories make me think and laugh. I am so glad you have such a wonderful and great adventures because your stories make me laugh and think. Thank you so much for writing them.

Blessings and Hugs,
Love
Shauna

This letter from Shauna Casey, a homeschooled fourth grader from Salem, was selected as the Level I winner in New Hampshire.

Dear Thornton Wilder,

Your play *Our Town* changed my view of the world and my view of life completely. It helped me realize that life isn't something to take for granted or rush through, because once you lose life, you'll never get it back. *Our Town* opened my eyes to how blind most people are to the beauty of everyday things and how much those everyday things mean to them. However, out of all the things I learned from *Our Town* the most important thing was how much family means, and how, like life, people take family for granted. Most people don't realize that families are like everything else, they don't last forever.

Life is nothing to take for granted. The plain idea of it is remarkable. To be able to inhale air, an invisible substance, and all of a sudden have thoughts and feelings is something all people do, but none of those people realize it's a truly amazing thing. "Mother Gibbs? Yes, Emily? They don't understand do they? No, dear. They don't understand." (p. 111) This is the quotation that pieced your whole play together for me; it told me that I didn't understand. This quotation helped teach me to take a breath, and a look around at the world every step I take. Now I keep my eyes open for every day beauty because, unlike Emily, I don't want to lose what I have before I know I have it. Everyone has always told me "You don't know what you have until you lose it." That has always been a saying that I've feared. Thanks to your play *Our Town*, I don't have to be one of the millions of people who learn that the hard way. Now that *Our Town* has taught me this idea, I'll never let it leave my mind or heart. I always hear people complaining about how old they are, but maybe if they had enjoyed being young, then they wouldn't be upset about being old. By complaining they're just wasting even more of their life, and that's something they don't want to waste. Life isn't a movie; you can't rewind it; there are no 'do overs.' Once you start life, you're forever stuck in an endless cycle, but unlike a normal cycle, life doesn't go around and around in a circle. It constantly moves forward, never meeting its starting point again. Once when my English teacher, Mr. Moore, was looking out the window at the little kids, he said, "I'd give any thing to have that again." This showed me that some people don't take life for granted, but just love it so much they never want it to end. The only problem with that is that it does end, and they can't do anything about it.

People are blind to more than life in general, they're blind to more specific things like the sun rising over the mountaintops, or the long grass swaying in the morning breeze. "I never realized. So all that goes on and we never noticed." (p. 108) Realizing you have lost everything you had must be a scary feeling. But realizing you lost everything you had before you knew you had it must be a million times worse. To realize that you'd never be able to smell your mothers cookies, or your fathers stew again, having it snatched away before your very eyes, that must bring an overwhelming feeling of sorrow to all that experience it. "That's all human beings are! Just blind people." (p. 109) People who can see perfectly are as blind as those who can't see, only they're blind to something else – they're blind to life. All that it takes to avoid being blind to life is to take one extra look around you every step your take, and someone to remind you to look. For me, you, Thornton Wilder, reminded me to look.

People may think that they love and give thanks for their families, but they most likely don't do this enough. "I can't bear it. They're all so young and beautiful. Why did they ever have to get old?" (p. 105) Families are like every other living thing, they grow old, and then they disappear. I realized that family is a privilege, some people don't have families at all, or they're missing members of theirs. *Our Town* helps people who live in small, rural, New England towns like me come out of these isolated bubbles and step into reality. All people like me saw when we were in our bubbles was a perfect world, but really there are lots of disappointments out there. Once I popped my bubble I realized all these things like family are advantages many people don't have, and they are things that I should be grateful for.

In conclusion, I want to thank you for opening my eyes to everything I've been missing for so many years. I missed noticing each movement in my childhood, but instead of regretting that and missing even more of life, I'm going to start enjoying life for what it is – amazing!

Thank you,

Evelyn Bulkeley

This letter, from a seventh grader at the Runnemed School in Plainfield, was selected as the Level II winner in New Hampshire.

The deadline for 2006 *Letters About Literature* entries is December 1, 2005. For details, and the required entry coupon, visit our web site at <http://www.state.nh.us/nhsl/bookcenter/programs/letters.html>.

Granite State Readers Recommend

We recently invited readers from around the state to tell us about a book that they would recommend to others. Here is a selection of the recommendations that we received. Please check out the complete list of Granite State readers' recommendations and tell us about a book that you would recommend by visiting our web site at www.state.nh.us/nhsl/bookcenter/programs

Concord

Alice Nye

Coordinator, Family Resource

Connection, NH State Library

Peace Like a River by Leif Enger was one of *Time Magazine's* top five novels for 2001 and I can see why. The language is beautiful, the voice distinctive, the plot riveting and the characters are fully fleshed, funny (at times) and moving (almost always). The novel takes place in the early 1960s in rural Minnesota, and is narrated by 11 year old Reuben who, together with his father and younger sister, head across the western plains in mid winter to find his brother on the run from the law.

Franklin

Rachel Stolworthy

Children's Librarian,

Franklin Public Library

I read *The Glass Castle: A Memoir* by Jeannette Walls this summer. Walls is a writer and reporter for MSNBC.com, and she has written the story of her life and the lives of her parents and siblings. I LOVED this book! Jeannette's family lived an eccentric, nomadic existence during her childhood years, mainly in the American southwest. Her parents were unconventional, with a very relaxed view of parenting (to put it mildly -- today we would call this neglect) but she loves them for who they are.

Gilsum

Denise

1- *My Sister's Keeper* by Jodi Picoult. She is so good at putting skin on ethical situations and telling all points of view equally.

2- *My Name is Asher Lev* by Chaim Potok. The images in this story are powerful & lasting.

3- *Your Blues Ain't Like Mine* by Bebe Moore Campbell. She has fictionalized the story of Emmett Till & followed the surviving characters for about 40 years after.

4- *Prince Edward* by Dennis McFarland. Powerful story of Prince Edward County Virginia's response to desegregation. Wonderful book.

Grantham

Joey Holmes

Assistant Librarian

Going to the Chapel by Rebecca Kelly, *A Town called Ruby Prairie* by Annette Smith and *Home to Harmony* by Philip Gulley. I liked them because they are just good reading.

Madison

Elaine Robinson

Geek Love by Katharine Dunn

This novel has the quirkiest cast of characters and situations of any cult story written in the last twenty years. Circus sideshow freaks of nature dominate this odd tale of a perfectly dysfunctional family. You can see the scenes played out in your mind as you read along. A delight for the reader who likes things off the best-seller lists.

Madison

Leonora Southwick

Assistant Librarian

We Need to Talk about Kevin by Lionel Shriver is more than your basic high school massacre novel. Told in letters by the mother to her husband you are not prepared for the shocking final chapters. Heartbreaking and unforgettable makes this my favorite book of 2004.

Manchester

Todd Russell

Attorney

Neverwhere by Neil Gaiman.

A fascinating, otherworldly account of the London Underground by one of the up and coming fantasy writers.

North Hampton

Lorreen Keating

Youth Services Librarian,

North Hampton Public Library

I very much enjoyed *Evening Ferry* by Katherine Towler. Like her first novel *Snow Island* the characters are vivid and the writing is poetic. I found *Evening Ferry* to be very thought-provoking about issues of personal identity, life choices, and family histories. Bravo Katherine!

Peterborough

Brian Hackert

Reference Librarian,

Peterborough Town Library

Calamity and Other Stories by Daphne Kalotay (New York: Doubleday, 2005.)

The House of Breathing: Stories by Gail Jones (New York: George Braziller, 2000.) Short stories are my favorite kind of reading, and for all the same reasons that Edgar Allan Poe felt that way, too. These two collections are unique and surprising yet reflect basic moods that any reader can identify with in some manner or other. There aren't many copies of either title in the NH library system, so I hope this recommendation increases the numbers.

Sanbornville

Beryl Donovan

Director, Gafney Library

1- *In the Shadow of the Cathedral*, written by Titia Bozuwa (NH writer), is a vivid recollection of the Nazi occupation of Holland during World War II through the eyes of a ten-year old girl (Titia, herself). This is no ordinary memoir. Titia combines a solid remembrance of the feelings, scents, stories, sounds and adult happenings that affected her life during turbulent times. A great read for adults and for young students studying about World War II.

2- *Leaving Mother Lake* by Yang Erche Namu ... a biography of a young girl in the Moso country of remote China who leaves her home causing a scandal for her family. Learning about day to day happenings and the effects of the cultural revolution on her matrilineal society was fascinating.

Somersworth

Cynthia G. Riley

Librarian, Somersworth High School

Confessions of an Economic Hit Man by John Perkins

N.H. native John Perkins tells his own story in this account of corporate power, greed and corruption. It ties a lot of current events together, explaining better than many available sources the tragedy of the haves and the have-nots, and the "why do they hate us?" question.

Dublin Committee Asks: “What Constitutes a Novel of High Literary Merit”?

By Alice Nye

The NH State Library nominating committee for the International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award is on a hunt for novels written in English and published in 2005 that are of high literary merit and thus worthy of nomination for this prestigious literary award.

The next deadline for our choices (we can make up to three) is May 2006. That will make the sixth year that New Hampshire has participated in this international competition. While none of our recommendations has won the big prize—at 100,000 pounds, the largest literary prize given out in the world—some of our favorites have made the Short List of nominated titles that vie for the award in the final phase of the competition.

Our most recent nominations were made last spring when the NH State Library was one of 185 libraries representing 51 countries to nominate novels for the 2005 Award. Our slate of three was: *Shadow of the Wind* by Carlos Ruiz Zafon; *There is Room for You* by Charlotte Bacon; and *My Nine Lives* by Ruth Praver Jhabvala.

Coming up with a list of novels we particularly admire has been no problem for our group, all of whom are critical readers not at all shy about expressing their special favorites. However, an engaging read, original characters, even a fast-paced plot does not necessarily make a novel of “high literary merit,” which is the standard for nomination.

What qualities do you think make a novel of high literary merit? Two years ago our committee convened

to grapple with this question and came up with ten characteristics to help guide us in our choices (see sidebar for our listing). If you feel we have missed some critical qualities, please let us know, and we will consider adding them to our list. Also, please alert us to 2005 published novels that you believe may be worthy of consideration. There’s a long, cold winter on the horizon, and we are looking for some current novels of distinction to warm our hearts and minds in the months ahead.

Characteristics of a Novel of High Literary Merit

- ◆ Innovative story or themes
- ◆ Fresh perspective
- ◆ Well developed characters
- ◆ Well developed plot
- ◆ Well written—quality of writing shines
- ◆ Suitably concluded (a poor ending can kill an otherwise excellent book)
- ◆ Emotionally engaging
- ◆ Intellectually engaging
- ◆ Contains life lessons
- ◆ Leaves a lasting impact

NH Books

continued from p. 2

Tolles, Bryant F., Jr. *The Grand Resort Hotels of the White Mountains: a Vanishing Architectural Legacy*. Boston, MA: David R. Godine, 1998

Tolles, an esteemed professor at the University of Delaware, has written a comprehensive survey of the architecture and history of New Hampshire’s grand hotels of the White Mountains. Beginning with the earliest guesthouses and New Hampshire’s first “grand” hotel, the first Glen House, and culminating with the construction of the Mount Washington Hotel and The Balsams, Tolles covers in depth the history of each of the state’s resort hotels in the White Mountains. Sadly, at the time of publication only four of the original 30 hotels were still operating.

Landphair, Ted. *The Mount Washington: a Century of Grandeur. Bretton Woods: The Mount Washington Hotel & Resort*, 2002

A beautifully illustrated history of the hotel, from the first tourists to visit Abel Crawford’s simple cabin in 1828 through the 1902 construction of the Spanish Renaissance Revival hotel still operating near Crawford Notch. The Mount Washington Hotel was built and owned by Concord native Joseph Stickney, who unfortunately died in 1903, soon after the grand opening. The hotel survived trying times, was selected as the site of the Bretton Woods Monetary Conference, and continues today as a thriving year-round resort.

Robinson, J. Dennis. *Wentworth by the Sea: the Life and Times of a Grand Hotel*. Portsmouth: Peter E. Randall Publisher, 2004

New Hampshire’s most recently restored (2003) grand hotel stood empty and forlorn for twenty years. Built in 1874 on the state’s coast, the hotel was the site of the negotiation of the Treaty of Portsmouth, ending the Russo-Japanese War in 1905. Portsmouth journalist Robinson chronicles the long history of the Wentworth hotel in the tiny town of New Castle, its close brush with destruction and current renaissance.

Children's Historical Collection

By Ann Hoey
Youth Services Consultant,
New Hampshire State Library

The Children's Historical Collection at the New Hampshire State Library began as a special collection containing books and other materials that children had read through the years, offering examples of social history and showing trends in writing for children and in developments in children's literary history. It was not meant to showcase the best in children's literature but rather to collect what was popular for children at different times in history. The collection was primarily intended as a reference collection for use by students, educators, writers, artists, and sociologists.

Until recently, approximately 7500 titles made up the Children's Historical Collection, which included titles published between 1850 and the present. In 2002, the State Library decided to narrow the focus of the collection so that it better supported our mission of serving as a resource center on New Hampshire. Only materials with a New Hampshire connection were retained in the collection, which now includes works by New Hampshire children's authors and illustrators as well as materials about New Hampshire. Additionally, winners of the various New Hampshire book awards such as the Great Stone Face Award and the Isinglass Award will be added to this special collection.

With the exception of those materials whose age or condition makes them unsuitable for circulation, most of the titles in the Children's Historical Collection can be checked out to patrons directly or through interlibrary loan.

National Book Festival

Continued from p. 1

on three "Everything Kids" puzzle books, also came by to snap pictures of the event. Thank you, Jennifer and Beth, for joining us!

Despite the steady crowd at our table, we each found time to hear at least a couple of authors speak. The list of authors in attendance made choosing whom to see very tough indeed. Are you a fan of fiction or fantasy? How about Tom Wolfe? E.L. Doctorow? Gish Jen? John Irving? Is history and biography more your thing? You might

Mary. Todd also saw Knight as well as Tom Wolfe, Neil Gaiman, and John Feinstein, although he struck out in trying to get a signature on his copy of Tom Wolfe's *Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* despite waiting in line for nearly two hours. Michael York meanwhile chose to hear David Brooks and David McCullough in the History & Biography pavillion.

I also made time to walk over and catch a glimpse of the protest going on just a couple of blocks away. Actually, other than the occasional sign or banner held by

**Visit the festival website at
www.loc.gov/bookfest/
to see pictures from the festival and to listen
to webcasts of various featured authors.**

have seen Joseph Ellis, Kay Bailey Hutchison, David McCullough, or Andrea Mitchell. That's just a small sample of the authors in attendance (really, you have to wonder if they can keep this a one-day event. With about 90,000 people in attendance, and overflow crowds at most tents, expanding to two days seems inevitable). Personally, I opted for novelist Jonathan Safran Foer and biographer Joseph Ellis, both of whom were outstanding. Mary made it a point to hear a reading by Donald Hall, featured in the Poetry tent, and Hilary Knight, illustrator of *Eloise*, a character near and dear to

protesters who stopped by our table, we never would have guessed that such a large protest was going on so nearby. It was quite a day in Washington, as IMF and World Bank held meetings, and an anti-war rally that drew 100,000 protesters shared the headlines with the book festival. Heck, there was even a SegwayFest in town.

When 5:00 arrived, we were all ready to pack up. Our stamps were dry, our handouts were depleted, and our backs and feet were sore. But come next fall, when the festival rolls around again, count me in. If you love books, this is the place to be.

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<http://www.state.nh.us/nhsl/bookcenter>

Award Notes

New Hampshire is home to several book awards and details about each of them are included on the Center's web site at www.state.nh.us/nhsl/bookcenter/literacyc/awards.html

The Flume Award

New Hampshire's first teen book award is off and running! The list of nominees for The Flume: NH Teen Readers' Choice 2006—to be voted on in school and public libraries next April—can be found on the CHILIS website at www.chilisnh.org/flume06.html. In addition, librarians will be accepting nominations from high school students this fall for the 2007 list. Eligible titles may be nonfiction or fiction and were published no earlier than 2003. The Flume Award is sponsored by the New Hampshire Library Association.



Ladybug Picture Book Award

A cow in search of her moo; a walk that balances bravery and fear; a gumbo-making gator; a vacation-planning pig; a slew of slithery serpents; a winter-wonderland-wary boy; a hug-happy sister; an iguana negotiation; a traumatic trip to the laundromat; and the adventurous El Skippito are vying for the attention of New Hampshire children who will select the 2005 Ladybug Picture Book Award winner this November. The list of nominated books, ballots, tally sheets, and order forms for voting stickers are all available on the web at www.state.nh.us/nhsl/bookcenter/programs/ladybug.html. Ballots are due November 30, 2005!

NH Literary Awards

The New Hampshire Writers' Project will present the 2005 New Hampshire Literary Awards October 21 at the New Hampshire Institute of Art in Manchester. Reception, 5:30 p.m.: awards presentation, including a special reading by 2003 Lifetime Achievement winner Tomie dePaola, 7 p.m. Admission is \$15. Details at www.nhwritersproject.org or 603-314-7980.

Sarah Josepha Hale Award

Grace Paley, an acclaimed writer of short stories, a poet, and an activist, is the Sarah Josepha Hale Award winner for 2005. Ms. Paley is the author of the short story collections *The Little Disturbances of Man*, *Enormous Changes at the Last Minute* and *Later the Same Day*. Her poetry collections include *16 Broadrides*, *Goldenrod*, and *Leaning Forward*. She has taught at Columbia University, Syracuse University and Sarah Lawrence College. She is a founding member of the Greenwich Village Peace Center and a former columnist for *Seven Days*. Her awards include a Guggenheim fellowship in fiction, a National Institute of Arts and Letters Award, and the first Edith Wharton Award. A native of New York, she now divides her time between the city and Thetford, Vermont.

The presentation will take place on November 5th at 8:00 p.m. at the Newport Opera House. The event is free. Tickets for a dinner with the author at the Court House Restaurant will go on sale in October. For more information please contact Andrea Thorpe at 603-863-3430 or rfl@newport.lib.nh.us.

Great Stone Face Award

The *City of Ember* by Jeanne DuPrau won last year's GSF Book Award with 699 votes out of a total of 6124 votes cast by children in grades 4 to 6 throughout NH. *The City of Ember* is about a city whose lights are beginning to go out, plunging the city into a suffocating darkness. When Lina finds a portion of a secret message, she and her friend, Doon, discover the secret way out of their city. The booklist for 2005-2006 is available at www.derry.lib.nh.us/childrens/greatstoneface.html

The Great Stone Face Committee meets at the Bedford Public Library the 2nd Friday of every month, except December and May-August. They are always looking for new members who love to read children's books. For details contact Adele Boesky at adeleb@derry.lib.nh.us.

Isinglass Award

The Isinglass Teen Read Award for 2005 went to Christopher Paolini for his book *Eragon*. This award was voted on by 7th & 8th graders in the state. Our new 2005-2006 list can be found under Teen Zone at www.barringtonlibrary.com. Recommendations are currently being accepted from 7th and 8th grade students for the 2006-2007 list. Suggestions can be sent to blibrary@metrocast.net by February 1, 2006.

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Center for the Book
at the New Hampshire State Library
20 Park Street Concord, NH 03301

The mission of the Center for the Book at the NH State Library is to celebrate and promote reading, books, literacy, and the literary heritage of New Hampshire and to highlight the role that reading and libraries play in enriching the lives of the people of the Granite State.

Please enjoy this complimentary issue of Book Notes. This newsletter is sent to members of the Center for the Book at the New Hampshire State Library twice each year. To find out how you can become a member of New Hampshire's Center for the Book see page 5.

Introducing the NH Authors Database

*By Mary A. Russell, Director
NH Center for the Book*

Over the last few hundred years, many hundreds of writers have lived in the Granite State and have produced a vast array of literature on every topic imaginable.

To help readers to find out about all of these authors, the New Hampshire Center for the Book has launched – in partnership with the Reference Section of the New Hampshire State Library – the *New Hampshire Authors Database*. The database began with all the entries from the published work *New Hampshire Authors, Sixth Edition, Revised & Enlarged*, which was compiled by Donna Gilbreth in 1998. To the 1000+ authors found in that volume we have added new authors and additional information about some of the ex-

isting ones. Writers who were born in the Granite State, who are current residents, or who have spent a significant portion of their writing careers in New Hampshire and who have at least one published book cataloged in a New Hampshire library have been included.

You can search for authors by name and then display their full records to see what awards they have won, dates and places relevant to their lives, information on their published works, and in some cases web sites and a published biography about them.

Thanks to the research and database expertise of Charles Shipman, New Hampshire State Library Reference Librarian, the *New Hampshire Authors Database* currently contains over 1200 entries. If you know of a New Hampshire writer who has been overlooked, or if you would like to add to or correct information on an included writer, please let us know. The more detail you can provide about a writer the more quickly an entry can be added to the database. There is a link on the web site for sending suggestions and additions to the database.

**The NH Author's Database is available on the
NH Center for the Book web site at
[www.state.nh.us/nhsl/bookcenter/
literary/nh_authors.html](http://www.state.nh.us/nhsl/bookcenter/literary/nh_authors.html).**
